

# PENNSYLVANIA LONGBOW ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1989

## NEWSLETTER

Volume 30 – Number 4 – December 2024

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## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

*By Gary Dickey, Jr.*

Hello all, I hope everyone is doing well and having a good year. It's going fast and December will be here before we know it.

I got to say that my term as President so far has been going great! Now with that said, I owe it all to the Board members for all their hard work, to all the PLA members for all their help and support, to our Host clubs, and to Big Scott, our past president, for his guidance. You all make my job easy and enjoyable so keep up the good work! We sure have had a lot of fun and great memories are made as we are one big family. It has really been a joy so far and look forward serving as the years go on.

I hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving, will have a good Christmas. To our hunters a safe season and freezers full of game and plenty of memories made.

Thanks again to all of you and wish you the very best!

## 2025 IS AN ELECTION YEAR

For the **PLA**, odd years are elections years. If you want to run for an office, please send me a

candidate profile by February 15, so I can get it in the March Newsletter. Elections will be held at the Annual Shoot at Marsh Hill in June.

## **35<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION**

*The PLA was conceived of in the Autumn of 1989 and 1990 was a big year. I've gathered a couple recollections from people for this issue. I have thousands of photos, but can only pick a few for this issue.*

For anyone that was intrigued by the teaser in the last issue of the newsletter. The photo below was taken in 2003 at Marsh Hill. Paige McAuley (PLA's Treasurer) is on the far right. If you are a long time PLA member then you have watched Paige grow up. As a teen and then a young woman, she has worked at registration booths selling raffle tickets and merchandise. Just another example of the 35-year traditions that run deep in the Pennsylvania Longbow Association!



*L to R: Taylor Slowik, Anita Spencer, Benny Naimon, Johnny Spencer, and Paige (Slowik) McAuley.*

## **REFLECTIONS FROM THE BEGINNING**

***By Phil Magistro***

I joined the PLA right after they held their first Annual shoot. Many may not know it, but the first PLA Annual Shoot was the first Denton Hill Shoot. Tom Cole approached Mike Knefley with the idea of holding a traditional archery

shoot. It went well and plans were started for another shoot the following year.

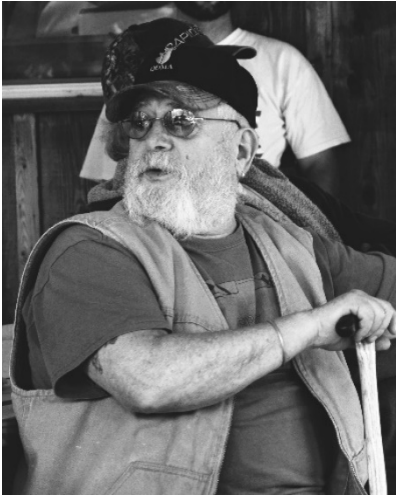
Nobody knew the tremendous growth Denton Hill would experience or things may have worked out differently. As it was, the PLA was disappointed in the share of money they received and, after some offers and counteroffers, the PLA leadership decided to leave Denton Hill and begin their own annual shoot.

The falling out over the shoot had repercussions within the PLA and some folks left the organization and new officers were installed. I began working as the newsletter editor to help communication with members as the PLA started out. At the time I was publishing The Bowmen's Bulletin, a magazine for The Society of Traditional Bowmen and offered to include a PLA newsletter in the magazine and send a copy to each PLA member. That continued for a few years until a new magazine, Traditional Bowhunter, took over the traditional market and falling subscriptions forced the closing of the Bowmen's Bulletin. Then we went to a dedicated newsletter for members.

The PLA held their second and several subsequent shoots on a farm in Tioga County. The owners' names escape me but the location was very nice. The shoot and organization continued to grow but membership seemed to hover around 100. After a few years, that land was no longer available for the shoot, so a search began for another location.

There were so many people instrumental in growing the organization through its infancy. Jim Billings served as President and Jim Sherwood served as Vice-President. Later Jim Sherwood became President and Brian Hartford was Vice President. Brian may have taken over after Jim Sherwood, my memory is a bit hazy on that. Jesse Miller then became President and Dennis Mathews followed Jesse. There were many other people that helped the organization grow. Two of the more

familiar names include Wes Waldron ("Muldoon") and Ed Wentzler.



Wes "Muldoon" Waldron at Marsh Hill 2015

The organization began to hold smaller, local shoots in addition to the Annual Shoot. One of the locations was Jesse Miller's home club - Frontier Archery near Pottstown.

As my son got older and left for college, I became less involved in the organization. Eventually the shoot found a home at Sheshequin Buckskinners.

## PAST OFFICERS

### PRESIDENTS

Jim Billings 1990 - 1993  
Jesse Miller 1993 - 1999  
Dennis Matthews 1999 - 2003  
Ed Bosley 2003 - 2009  
Frank Covington 2009 - 2013  
Scott Slowik 2013 - 2023  
Gary Dickey, Jr 2023 - Present



OFFICERS of the newly formed Pennsylvania Longbow Association are Brian Hartford, treasurer and membership chairman, Thomas Cole, secretary, James Sherwood, vice-president, and James Billings, president.

### PLA's Original Officers in 1991 L-R:

Brian Hartford - Treasurer / Membership  
Thomas Cole - Secretary,  
James Sherwood - Vice President,  
James Billings - President

### VICE-PRESIDENTS

Jim Sherwood 1990 - 1993  
Dennis Matthews 1993 - 1999  
Lou McCabe 1999 - 2003  
Frank Covington 2003 - 2009  
Rich Briggs 2009 - 2016  
Jim Hurt 2016 - 2023  
Jeff Stahler 2023 - Present

### TREASURERS

Brian Hartford 1990 - 1995  
Samuel J. Miller, Sr. 1995 - 2005  
Carol Covington 2005 - 2007  
Matt Fricker 2007- 2009  
Dave Messner 2009 - 2017  
Jim Ciociolla 2017 - 2021  
Paige (Slowik) McAuley 2021 - Present

### SECRETARYS

Tom Cole 1989 - 1991  
Phil Magistro 1991 - 1995  
Samuel J. Miller, Sr. 1995 - 1999  
Kevin Pfanders 1999 - 2000  
Tim Burris 2000 - 2011  
Fred Folmer 2011 - 2015  
Bess Ellen Criswell 2015 -2021  
Elsa Zumstein 2021 - 2023  
Robert Klinger 2023 - Present

### MEMBERSHIP SECRETARYS

Brian Hartford 1990 - 1993  
Lee Stone 1993 - 1995  
Leon Stewart 2003 - 2005  
Bess Ellen Criswell 2005 - 2015  
Irene Stergos 2015 -2016  
Dave Messner 2017 - 2021  
Bess Ellen Criswell 2021 - 2023  
Elsa Zumstein 2023 - Present

### NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Phil Magistro 1991- 1995  
Wes Muldoon Waldron 1995 - 2000  
Mike & Lisa Carter 2000 - 2001  
Tim Burris 2001 - 2016  
Mike Herceg 2016 - 2019  
Joe Hurt 2019  
Bess Ellen Criswell 2020 - 2024



Tim Burris 2024 -Present



*Jesse Miller at Forksville 2024. saved the PLA from the brink of extinction.*



## **MEMORIES ABOUT THE PLA MARSH HILL SHOOT**

*By Bill Fink*

In the beginning, it was only Jesse Smith and Dennis Matthews from the PLA and several Buckskinners setting up for the Shoot. One year we were setting up the bridges and the water was pretty high. We were all wearing hip boots except for Larry Willets who was wearing chest waders. Back then, the wooden bridge sections weighed a ton. Well, Larry was on the downstream side when one of the planks got loose and started floating down the creek. It knocked him over and his waders filled with water. He and the plank were floating downstream. I went over my hip boots to grab him, and others went in to grab the plank. It was pretty hairy for a couple minutes. The

water was COLD. Larry weighed a ton with his waders filled with water and we had to wrassle that heavy planking back against the current with our boots all full of water. Eventually we got everything back on keel, got the bridge set up, changed our clothes and got ready to set targets.

In those days, we didn't do much with the trail. We'd be luggin' those heavy targets along narrow deer paths getting hung up in stickers and brush. I'd walk the course after the first day and the trail was all tramped down and getting wider. By the time we pulled the targets at the end of the weekend, the trail as wide as a highway and everything behind the targets was all stomped down by people looking for arrows.

I started working breakfast at the Shoot for the Buckskinners. At first, I was taking money while Dale Spring cooked breakfast. Eventually, I got promoted to cooking breakfasts. That was great because I got to meet everyone there. I got to talking to people, where they were from, etc. I made such good friends over the years. When I first started making breakfast for the Shoot I would go through 25 pounds of bacon for the weekend. Then eventually it went up to 30 pounds. It dropped off to around 20 pounds for a couple years. But now we are up over 35 pounds of bacon for the Shoot.

I have some special memories of those early Shoots. There were tents all around the edge of the field and hardly any "tin teepees" back then. But we had real teepees in the field. Leon Stewart had his teepee, Mike Carter, Shawn Gardner and the guy with the flutes all had real canvas teepees. It was a pretty cool to see all those teepees, canvas tents and even all the nylon tents.





*A teepee at Marsh Hill 2010*

The field was open in the middle and kids would play football or frisbee in the evening. The Buckskinners would get kegs of birch beer and set out in the field for folks to go to. Oh, and the community campfires. There was so much food being passed around: sausage, caribou stew, deer steaks, donuts and frybread... Oh my God, you would walk away totally stuffed. Oh, and people had jugs of Bug Juice too.

The PLA Shoot has really helped our club financially and keeps our club active. I have made so many friends through the shoots over the years. And I lost a few too.

Years ago, I started calling George Criswell Uncle George. Well after a while he played along and would call me "Nephew". Well don't you know, after a bit there were people that really thought we were related!

Frank Covington. When we'd be singing around the campfire, Frank would always join in. And you knew which songs were Frank's favorites. He'd jump right in and belt it out. After Frank passed, we'd sing "The Battle of 1814" or another of Frank's favorites. Good thing it was dark and smoky, because we'd all tear up.



*Frank Covington at West Caln 2008*

My good buddy, Bill Knerr, would park on the stool at the top of the steps by the club house. If someone needed anything, he'd jump up and help. Grab more eggs or pancake mix. Grab toilet paper if one of the outhouses ran out. He was always there to help out during the shoot.

Let me end with a funnier story. The dumpster used to be closer to the campers. A member got up early and heard thrashing in the dumpster. A bear cub stuck his head up and ran off into the woods with a bag of trash. Then another cub jumped up and ran off with a bag. Eventually, Mamma jumped over the side with a bag and took off into the woods. So, a few of us spent part of the morning picking up trash that they spread around.

Remember, take only pictures; leave only footprints.

Bill Fink



*Larry Ward shooting at one of the early -PLA shoots near Sylvania. (1991)*



*Scott Slowik at West Caln 2013*



*Dennis Matthews at Marsh Hill*



*Bess Ellen Criswell at Marsh Hill 2013*



*Ed Bosley at Marsh Hill 2006*



*Dave Messner at Marsh Hill 2013*





*Mike Hill and Tim Burris storm clean up at Marsh Hill to open the island. 2005*



*Marsh Hill*



*Standing Stone 2012*



*West Caln Shoot 2014 L-R: Carol Covington, Frank Covington, Todd Wittman, Leon Stewart, Gary Dickey*



*Kids games at Marsh Hill 2017*

**Pennsylvania Longbow Association**  
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*Cabin Fever Shoot 2014*



*Delta-Peachbottom 2016*